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THE WITCHES'
SABBATH
E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN
OXFORD
BLACKWELL

"ADVENTURERS ALL" SERIES.
No. XI.
XI
THE WITCHES' SABBATH

FIR
ADVENTURERS
ALL.
A SERIES
OF
YOUNG
POETS
To-
FAME.
D
COME MY FRIENDS...
'TIS NOT TO LATE TO SEEK
A NEWER WORLD IT MAY
BE THAT THE GULFS WILL WASH
US DOWN. IT MAY BE WE
SHALL TOUCH THE HAPPY
ISLES YET OUR PURPOSE
HOLDS...TO SAIL BEYOND
THE SUNSET. 60
ULYSSES
THAT
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TRY. ZA MACCHETTES.
XV

THE WITCHES
SABBATH
BY
E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN
UNIM OF
OXFORD
B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD ST.
1917

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THE WITCHES' SABBATH.

YOUNG WITCH.

ERE upon the topmost ridge
HERE
Underneath the glaring moon
Shall we revel-oh how soon?
Winds are hushed, no bird or midge
Shivers the suspended air,
Mortal creatures everywhere
Deathlike swoon in drowning sleep;
I, only I, sad vigil keep
When seas and lakes and brooks are still
And the owl with drooping quill
Mopes amid the smothering trees.
Oh for a shaft of sudden breeze
To bear
my friends o'er moor and hill
Unto this consecrated steep;

7

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
Since none but they can loose my trance
By greeting and excited dance.
Peace, peace, no echo breaks the stillness,
Woods and mountains all are dumb.
When will they come, when will they come?
I wander as a child in illness,
Circled with self-created forms,
I, that in sombre art
Exult supreme
O'er life and dream,
Controlling with fantastic power
Every place and every hour,
Every whole in every part,
The raindrop and the thunderstorms,
The lioness and the flower.
Wherefore then do these affray me,
Impotent to disobey me,
Moonlit rock and silent wind,
Shadows of a startled mind?
8

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
Be resolute; the heaven
Glooms indifferent and even,
Save where in midmost west
Mine eye possest
Upon a seamy cloud doth rest
No bigger than a puff-ball or the vapour
Blown around a student's taper;
Waxing it slips
Over the valley's lips,
Now dissipates in the air
Like streaming flecks of hair,
Now looms a giant bat,
Erring this way and that.
It sees me; ha, they come
With sound of pipe and drum,
Poised upon their besom steeds,
Trailing foul dishevelled weeds.
They cry, they cry!
Great ones, draw nigh!
Welcome, thrice welcome, each beloved head;
The dance begins, the vigil's dead.
9

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
CHORUS.
From the broad-backed hills of the west we come,
When the moon is red and the north winds dumb,
With Hobkin, Gambelon, Mepus and Mow
To dance in a ring till the cockerel crow.
Rout a tout tout, around and about,
Twirling and whirling within and without.
Behind us our servitors caper and swing,
All creatures that nourish a bane or a sting,
The owl and the weasel, the viper and cat,

Besmearing their bodies with babbikins' fat.
Rout a tout tout, around and about,
Sprawling and brawling within and without.
Like owls are we baited and dazzled by day,
But now are we potent to gripe and to slay;
So hound we the victim, the night's in the bud,
And batten our souls on his body and blood.
Rout a tout tout, around and about,
Clawing and gnawing within and without.
10

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
OLD WITCH.
Cease the vile discordant chime;
Would ye slay before the time?
Aspen maid-speak-hast thou kept
This ring untrodden?
YOUNG WITCH.
None hath crept,
Nay, not a cricket past the edge.
OLD WITCH.
Then sprinkle perfumed grain of sedge,
While we dance and pray our king
Shed his presence o'er the ring.
Air.
Dancing up and down
With smirk and frown
Upon the naked hill
Before we kill,
All to Earl Asmodeus cry
"Come nigh, Mounseer, come nigh
And quickly quit thy burning town
With tail and horns awry,
With tail and horns awry."
11

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
ASMODEUS (appearing).
Unto this grey assemblage
I bring high presage.
To-night shall be
Done before me
A sacrifice of chastity.
ALL.
Who, who, who?
ASMODEUS.
'Tis not for you
To ask but do.
Call session,
Make profession.
OLD WITCH.
Obey our master, kneel you low
Winsomely, coaxingly, while I go
In and out, enticing forth
Each to tell his deeds and worth.
Come hither, lank fellow
With brow so yellow;
What ushered thee here?
Speak loud without fear.

12

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
STUDENT.
I am one the wise have maimed,
Assist me you that will;
My soul, a manuscript defamed,
Fell 'neath a pedant's quill.
Methinks it never dared to sight
The far Hermetic stone,
'Twas but a candle in the night
To draw the searchers on.
"A mist, a vanity misshaped,
Spawn from a madman's brain."
So judged the wise; my body 'scaped,
Its life, the soul, was slain.
Which body, vowed to devil's craft,
Now begs the lord of hell
A second soul therein to graft,
Wherewith 'twill serve him well.
OLD WITCH.
Well said, wise man, back to thy place!
Stand forth thou maid of veering face,
Our sentinel.
13

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
YOUNG WITCH.
Nothing to tell.
I am a whore and that is well.
OLD WITCH.
Prithee then sing us the life of a whore,
And we will clap on this grassy floor,
And when thou hast ended will curse thee for more.
YOUNG WITCH (sings).
A delicate thing is a doxy
To him who thinks her so,
Be she withered or poxy,
High-necked or low.
An amiable thing is a doxy
To him who thinks her so,
Be she callous or foxy
Or sour as a crow.
A fortunate thing is a doxy
To him who thinks her so,
For her motto, my masters, is flocci
Non facio.
14

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
ASMODEUS.
A brave song.
YOUNG WITCH.
It is not long.
But oh
That ye might know
My endless journeying!
I smile, I tremble, I sing.
But all for a love that never shines,

The love of a heart that's young and glad
For a body that's gay and worn and sad
With passionate clear designs,
By the world bewhored.
My first love was a lord.
OLD WITCH.
Tell us of him.
YOUNG WITCH.
His love was dim,
15

So on a calm night after a ball
I quit his hall
And fled to Ireland,
You understand,
With jewels and pelf; I lost them all
In that peaty cynical place,
And the shag-haired race
Laughed in my face.
And so, returning, in a booth
I danced months upon end
And sold myself again and again
On autumn nights in moon and rain.
It was uncouth
That life, but pleasure's a friend,
Yes, pleasure is always a friend.
Until one eve I met this man
On a caravan,
Who told me of the witches' plan
And bade me here stand sentinel to-night
To drink delight.
Ask ye him if I speak aright.
For he will tell you truer than I
That am but woman, born to lie.
16

WIZARD.
Unasked I do approve
This maiden's story and her love.
OLD WITCH.
Hold back: thou shalt discourse in season
Of all thy junketings past reason.
Let the boy speak.
BOY.
Why do you ask me to speak? I have come to see
what things you do.
OLD WITCH.
How didst thou find the place,
Impudent face?
BOY.
I was hunting for the owl's nest in the elm by Madge
Clitheroe's cottage-I want the young ones-when
suddenly I saw old Madge at her door. "Where are
you faring?" I asked.
44 Would you
like to come
with me?" says she. So I came.

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
A WITCH.
Aye, aye, I brought him; he says he would be
A wonderful terrible witch like me
And ken the secrets of land and sea.
BOY.
Yes, that I would,
For who'd keep good
When by magic he can gain food?
ASMODEUS.
He that would belong
Unto this throng
Must utter a song.
Boy.
I know no song
of
my own
Save a mad thing of a dog and a bone,
But I'll sing you a catch that I learn at school
At times I am beaten for breaking a rule;
I remember it through pain.

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
(Sings.)
Unto Artemis the straight
Was my boyhood consecrate,
She it was who taught my heart
To enact a Spartan part,
She it was who taught my friend
Never weakly to unbend,
But like me to stand beneath
The rods unflinching to the death.
Unto Artemis the straight
Is
my manhood consecrate.
OLD WITCH.
A sorry song. Boy, thou hast ne'er known love.
Boy.
I have not known this lolling love you speak of;
I have loved trees and birds and four-legged things,
Helped where I could-yes-and I have a friend—
If he were here to-night-who shares with me
The spoils of chase, my match at every point,
Who, when he hates, strikes dead. What's this to you?
OLD WITCH.
This is not love, but when love finds thee out-

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
BOY.
I'll send him packing.
OLD WITCH.
Shalt be whipped with twigs
Well brined unless thou love before to-morrow.
Now, wizard, tell the wickedest thing thou hast done.

WIZARD.
It bears much thinking on, yet will I'sing
Lucinda's death, she who, you know, was found
Prone with her golden hair twined in the corn.
OLD WITCH.
And that was thy deed?
WIZARD.
Even mine. Attend.
(Sings.)
'Twas in a lonely cornfield
Upon the height of day,
I sat beside the maiden
Whose eyes had said me nay.

We changed no word, but in me
Desire exulted still;
A cloud of summer insects
Came floating up the hill.
"How now," quoth I, "you see them
Advance in buzzing show;
'Tis sure a solemn errand
Compels them from below."
She did not seem to mark me,
Nor looked she up or down,
But evermore in speaking,
I fixed her with my frown.
"See how they swarm and circle
Over the waving field
Towards the dainty victim
Whose modesty's her shield.
"Their captain prances foremost,
(Note you the red in's eyes)
To bear away the first fruits
Unto the prince of flies."
And as they seethed around us,
"When he has done," I laughed,
"His army falls a-swilling
The remnants of the draught.

"Some forage in the tresses,
Some gorge them at the teat,
And some-" I could not finish,
For she was dead at my feet.
ASMODEUS.
Enough, the night moves fast
And ye must sacrifice before the morn,
Therefore let that palsied wraith
Whose heart hath borne
Most sufferance in years past
Unfold our faith.
OLD WITCH.
Hey, Mother Grizzlegut, take you the book
And slowly read
The ancient creed
At which the white-skinned angels shook

Upon the day
When Lucifer gay
Was bidden amid the red furnaces play
Like a salamander,
Kinglier than Alexander.
Read, read, read.
22

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
MOTHER GRIZZLEGUT (reads).
Credo in unum Diabolum incarnatum cultores
suos spirituali igne vivificantem, bonis potentiis semper
obstantem, sanguinis amatorem, crudelem, crudelibus
faventem, qui pro nobis descendit in inferos, mox
emersurus cum magna augmentatione dominii sui;
credo in omnes suos ministros, quos pro multitudine
non possum nominare, qui libertatem promittunt
virtute vexilli infernalis magistri; credo in omnia
miracula, in philtra, in fascinationes, in incantamenta,
in Faunos, in Satyros, in monstrum quod Antonius
vidit in deserto; credo in vim maleficam intelligentiae
mortalis quae talia creavit, creat, et in futurum creabit;
credo in ultimam victoriam omnium qui divinationis
causa tormenta vicinorum patiuntur; credo in amorem,
mortem, sublimationem. Amen.
ALL.
Amen.
23

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
ASMODEUS.
Once there grew an apple-tree
In Mesopotamy;
That apple-tree is here to-day,
Pluck from it, pluck from it, while ye may.
Ah see!
They run to me
That was and am the apple-tree.
OLD WITCH.
Do homage, do homage unto the man
Who slays us by his master's ban.
A CHILD.
May I play with the great big goat?
YOUNG WITCH.
Yes, if he will play with you.
CHILD.
I love you for your shaggy coat.
24

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
ASMODEUS.
All little children do.
You think me a goat but I am everything,
With leg or leaf or stem or tail or wing.
CHILD.
I love you as a goat
And will stroke your coat.
OLD WITCH.
Boy, thou wouldst make a toothsome dish

Better than the John Dory fish.
BOY.
Eat me and I will gripe you in twain
So that you spew me up again,
For I have a force in me
Stronger than two or three
Such as to-night I see.
25

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
A WITCH.
Dream thou of love in the deep places
Where we loveless run our races
Over meads of asphodel,
Where are all things calm and well,
Slumber and fulfilled delight
In the arbours of the night,
Where we revel in their arms
That on earth contemned our charms,
Thread our fingers through their hair,
While upon our eyes they stare
As a bright-illumined page,
Where the creatures are one age,
Children in simplicity
Lost in what they feel and see;
There alone, boy, shalt thou know
Life beyond all joy and woe.
BOY.
What word is this I hear,
As if a flaming spear
Struck me i' the head?
OLD WITCH.
Youth's chrysalis is shed,
Love emerges presently.
26

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
BOY.
I'll go lean against this tree
And think and think and think.
ASMODEUS.
Sleep, in these arms, my branches, I'll enfold thee,
Boy that shalt view great light before the dawn.
Wonderingly thy comrades shall behold thee
Simple and clean with the swiftness of a fawn.
Rest thy dear head on this withered trunk my bosom.
It shall inbreathe thy soul with silent lore,
Framing thee kin to every plant and blossom
Built upon earth or patterned in her core.
BOY.
Think, think.
ASMODEUS.
Sleep, lovely innocence, sleep,
And be thy slumber deep;
(Sleeps.)
Learning shalt not know thou learnest,
Burning shalt not know thou burnest.
Even thus I seal his eyes;
Now is he due for sacrifice.

27

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
CHORUS.
We chant over him that is to die
A lullaby;
All knowledge lurks therein,
Goodness and sin.
The fires of love and fate are one,
Spumed from the almighty sun,
And meeting in a mortal's breast
Wean him, while he lives, from rest.
Like the ivy they shall coil
Round him in his daily toil,
Be he child or man up-grown,
He is always overthrown.
Death absolves; until death be
All abide in flaming fee,
And the wisest hopes no calm.
Ended is the witches' psalm.
28

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
PHANTOM.
Oh ye that purpose a murderous ill,
Ponder on me ere your lust ye fulfill,
A child that in your last year's rite
Fell with a soul as his ashes white.
Oh sleeping boy over thy tresses I hover,
A viewless intangible wandering lover;
The earth will not swallow, the heavens forsake me,
In mid air I float with the will to awake thee.
A JEW.
What music hums around us,
What queer pathetic wail?
It seems as if to wound us
Or make our courage fail.
So let us kill him soon
Before the death of the moon.
PHANTOM.
Have pity, have pity, cruel things.
Oh I am snatched by the black night's wings.
29

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
CHORUS.
When the great Good drove o'er the sky
At the creation of this earth,
'Twas ordered by the sun's keen eye
That Evil also should have birth.
Through vapours piercing to the ground
The brilliant unembodied ray
Scattered and lightning-wise enwound
Its arm about a lump of clay.
Twisting her coil erect upstood
The Serpent, foundress of our race,
And daring to dethrone the Good
Lanced her new fangs upon his face.
Back-beaten to the ground she crawled

And crawling vowed full recompense,
Compelling natures crude and bald
To serve her bitter exigence.
30

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
The earth is older since that hour
By many thousand thousand years,
And, still defeated, reigns the Power
Of seething hate and snaky fears.
By night enacting sacrifice
She revels o'er the martyred head,
And in her murder doubly wise
Herself with what she slays doth wed.
Come around with a bound and enmesh him
While he knows not what things we be,
With the sound of a hound let us flesh him,
Ere the quaintness of doom he see.
For his youth is our prey
And his eagerness fey,
His quick limbs shall flow
To the carrion-crow.
Come, your potency show;
Now with the creak of a crocodile's bill
Let us kill!
(They kill the Boy.)
31

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
OLD WITCH.
Infernal Lucifer, speak thou by the tongue
Of him whom thou hast raised our president.
Before his feet the sacrifice is flung,
With sacred and mysterious dirge o'ersung.
Speak, art thou well content?
Oh! oh! oh!
ASMODEUS.
I am content.
YOUNG WITCH.
(Vanishes.)
Thou bright-ringed wondering moon, look down, look
down
Upon this broken flesh; these eyes once loved,
These lips once parted, breathing prayer to thee
Whose kiss lay sweet on them; oft have I seen him
Coursing the ungrazed hills on winter eves
With jet-black hair delivered to the wind
And arms upstrained in eager joy to thee
That ridest careless o'er his funeral.
Oh crack, heart, crack!
WIZARD.
Silence, thou stricken fool.
32

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
YOUNG WITCH.
Thou paramour of Endymion look down,
And with thy lunatic glow despatch these fiends
Mid whom I stand, approving by my gaze

What the brain loathes to feature.
OLD WITCH.
Hold thy peace!
Wouldst mar our triumph by a peevish moan?
Thou hast approved, thou sayest; then be true
From first to last.
YOUNG WITCH.
Oh image of my brother
Lost in the wild, long lost!
(Sings.)
The pixy is from home to-night,
The pixy is from home,
And you will meet him, Robin bright,
If through the woods you roam.
You'll know him by his hazel staff
All tipped with silver sheen,
You'll know him by his piping laugh
And by his coat of green.

But ware the pixy, Robin bright,
And ware his mocking glee,
For if he choose the path to-night
You'll ne'er come home to me.
Dear face, I do believe thou art the same,
Yet here's a grain of copper in thy hair
He had not; when I die I'd look like thee.
(Swoons.)
WIZARD.
She follows him; now let us burn them both,
For our high master will be nothing loth,
Receiving two such victims on one night.
OLD WITCH.
Be rapid then, there bodes a streaky light
Already in the East.
JEW.
The flaming torch
Escort them splendidly to hell's high porch.
Kindle it, kindle it, and them withal,
My gaberdine shall be their bridal pall.

STUDENT.
Oh perfect love, bodies and spirits blent,
Shall flame transform thee to her element?
No. These are flame already, the great white
Of dawn is breaking down upon them.
OLD WITCH.
Night
Withers. The cock, the crowing cock; to horse!
Stay not, pale student, lest thou suffer worse!
ALL.
To horse, to horse!
STUDENT.
I have loved lovely things
And shall die loving them.
MOTHER GRIZZLEGUT.

On the morn's wings
We rise victorious; up legs, straddle-so!
Honorius, art ready? Hum! we go.
Follow, ye owls and ravens; Mepus chuck,
Cling to my neck and sing the evening's luck,
While we fly, fly, fly, even as we came.
Oh notable and most delirious game,
A boy killed and a strumpet on his breast;
Away with joy, away to the greyish west!
35

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
CHORUS.
Back from the rapture of dance and slaying,
Back to the hovel, back to the barn;
Up, broomsticks, up; be there no delaying,
Bear over moorland, valley and tarn.
We have broken him that would spy our revels,
Broken him body and blood and bone,
A hulk for the sable carrion devils
Strewn on the granite scaurs alone.
Alone? Nay, nay, for the wench hangs o'er him
Self-deemed a witch till the blade outflew ;
Our rite abhorring she'll soon abhor him
Girt in by the stern avenging crew.
And he that gazes, still bide he gazing,
Student of loveliness tranced and dead;
This day at his folly he whines amazing
So sure as the sun hath a saffron head.
Away, away; our salutation
Heed unwilling: perish ye,
Partners in the consecration,
Traitors to our exit's glee.
Away!
36

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
YOUNG WITCH (awakes.)
What is this light, this pain, this frankincense
That wreathes around my body? Are these eyes
Mine own, dashed with big dazzling clouds of heat?
What glory beckons? No-it cannot be
My long imagined lover.
STUDENT.
'Tis the dawn.
YOUNG WITCH.
Where are those evil shapes with whom I ranged
This mountain top?
STUDENT.
There were none; thou hast dreamed.
This boy thou seest did fordo himself;
37

THE WITCHES' SABBATH
I have known him long, he was a wanderer
And wandering bred despair; he thought to find
A visionary joy and, finding not,
Last even bent his step unto this place,
Where in the presence of the faithless moon

He gashed himself to death. I, footing slow
In meditation, for it is my wont
Nightly in this May season to discourse
With the high dead on airy solitudes,
Discovered him too late; then heard I thee
Walking and moaning in thy sleep; thy words
When I could read them, as was seldom, were
Of witches, demons and fantastic shapes
Begot by wine upon distempered wits,
Real but redeless; stumbling o'er his corse
Thou claspedst him, insensible till now.
YOUNG WITCH.
Nay, 'tis impossible, did I not guard
The circle till they came, trembling at rocks
And moon and loneliness?

STUDENT.
Still at thy trick,
Imagination? No, thou wert not here;
Thou hast misspent thy youth in wantonness
And love-nights have induced this dream in thee.
But we should move the body where it lies
Unto some kinder ground.
YOUNG WITCH.
I'll dig his grave.
STUDENT.
We'll lay him by the brook. Come let us heave him,
Singing the while.
(They depart singing.)
He is not dead we bear
But silent-hearted,
The glory from his hair
Is scarce departed,
His lips yet own their bloom,
His cheek its brightness,
But from his spirit's room
Is fled the lightness.

This flesh attuned to mirth,
This liquid colour
Shall marry with the earth
To shape her fuller,
But that we loved in him
The swift endeavour
Hath crossed the fatal brim
Returning never.
Oh weep not what is giv'n
To ways immortal,
Whom Proserpine hath shriv'n
At her grey portal;
Rejoice that boyhood's laugh
And sacred fury
Achieve a cenotaph
In us who bury.
Beside the golden stream

By pine-branch shaded,
There render we the dream
That passion raided.
If love can e'er upbuild
What death hath broken,
Already what was killed
Is reawoken.
40

THE PARROT.
(TO W.R.C.)
REEN ruler of the orient glade,
GR
Alone amid thy drowsy throng
Waking the warm exotic shade
With pageant flight and strident song,
Unused to breathe a calmer note
Immured upon an alien strand,
Would I might view thy downy throat
Resplendent with its crimson band.
For yesterday in autumn air,
Facing a bronzed and leafless tree,
Beneath the sun's declining glare
A fairy prospect broke on me.
It was a space of sylvan green,
Where frequent palms with sunny crown
Allured the airs, and in between
A waterfall was plashing down.
Poised on a vivid spray beside
A group of monkeys gazed below,
Mocking the music of the tide
With swinging tail and frolic mow.
41

THE PARROT
Sudden they started; from the trees
A glowing interloper came,
And each in envy strained to seize
One pennon of the floating flame.
Too late! the glory glided by,
Leaving a brightness in the air-
I woke; dim sunset tinged the sky,
The tree stood sullen, brown and bare.
'Twas fancy doubtless, or perchance
The memory of an Indian bowl;
No matter, since it could entrance
Drear autumn and a drearier soul.
Yet autumn rains were hours of mirth
And wintry tempests idle all,
Idle the obsequies of earth
Entombed beneath an icy pall,
Didst thou, green bird, whose lustrous wing
Could e'en in thought my grief beguile,
Anticipate the virgin spring
Upon this lorn and vacant isle.
42

ELEGY ON A DEAD POET.
AMBRIDGE to Lemnos is a near

CAR
Soul-journey, but thy spirit's here
And wheresoe'er men dream on thee
That art a bloom of poesy
Untimely plucked-perhaps-and yet
'Tis timely to have paid the debt
To nature as young Byron did.
Musical one, thou sure art rid
Of much unhappiness; thy song
Earnest assurance yields of wrong,
Sweet with the bitterness of love
That now hath gained the treasure trove.
43

L
MOMUS.
AUGHING elf, whose lifted brows
Beckon lovers to carouse,
And in fragrant gulfs of wine
Drown their ecstacy divine,
Speak, what wilt thou frame of me
That am framed thy votary?
I would not be ever thus
Passionate and hazardous,
Calmness is the life I love,
Cloistered in a college grove;
Yet am I in love with thee,
Momus, pledged thy votary.
Oh this double, double change
That about my heart doth range,
Brooding study, thought severe,
Truant laugh and gaming jeer.
Momus, be humane to me,
Though a lukewarm votary.
44

MOMUS
Fickle-and I know not why,
Yet my love will never die,
Being, as I understand,
Something strangely good, though banned.
Momus, Momus, bow to me
And I'll prove true votary.
Borne aloft on Momus' wing,
I'll declare a wondrous thing,
Quaint compounded of old books
Raptures and familiar looks,
Momus, I have filched of thee,
Votary of votary.
Thou art votary of joy,
Exquisite impassioned boy;
Yield then to my eager lip,
Such ripe kisses will we sip
That incontinent I'll be
Joy's and thou my votary.
45

EPILOGUE TO A FRIEND'S COMEDY.
TOW the tedious coil is ended;

Now
They who for your praise contended
Are with fall of curtain fled
To the brain from whence they sped,
Leaving only in their room
The bodies which they did assume,
Bodies which, if you are fain,
They can soon take up again,
Granted by your will new birth
To serve the smiling god of mirth.
Yet one boon alone they pray
Here upon the brink of day;
Though their sport no laughter have,
Please you laugh it to the grave;
That from such a mirthless show
You may not wholly mirthless go,
And they whose labour's vainly spent
May with a fancy bide content—
That, pleased they ill or pleased they well,
Laughter was their passing-bell.
46

THE FINGER.
OW
(TO R.T.)
How curiously this triple whole
Of skin and blood and bone
Consenteth to the mind's control
And to the mind's alone.
'Tis for diurnal uses mine,
To move howe'er I please,
Or mingle with its brothers nine
Enclasped about my knees.
Yet often when the mind's afar,
By vagrant thought bestirred,
It gaily shifts and beats the bar
To songs and sounds unheard.
Mute eloquence! 'Tis plain to see
As face in looking-glass
That more than one is lord of me
When this is brought to pass.
What else but mind and mind alone
Should rule the triple whole,
But how if skin and blood and bone
Themselves enshroud a soul?
47

I
ANY LOVER.
MARK in you the thing I dreamed
When I was but a dreaming boy,
The selfsame lips, the eyes that gleamed
Exultant with an elfin joy;
Even the curl upon your brow
Enacts the old enchanted night
Whose every hinted wonder now
Embodied reigns in air and light.
Oh come you from the cowslip glade

Where the green fairies masque and play
In lonely rings from evening shade
Until the gorgeous birth of day?
Or sprang you from a wayward sound
Dropt by a flute upon the air,
Unknown to all that danced around,
Unknown to him that breathed you there?
48

ANY LOVER
Oh let me peer
into those eyes
Where all immortal truths are shrined,
And draw their beams of clear surprise
Into my cold and aching mind.
Can it be false? No phantom you
Could thus my deepest faith belie;
Oh move not lest a void ensue-
Speak and in speech the doubt shall die.
49
D

COMMONSENSE.
THE
HE cat has got a tail, John,
And if you don't see that,
You are the biggest blunderer
Composed of flesh and fat.
Your sweetheart's got a cheek, John,
And if you don't see that,
You'll find it's not a tail, John,
But claws that make the cat.
50

THE DIVINING ROD.
D
(TO C.L.M.)
IVINERS use a rod to sound
The streaming courses underground.
A little fork of hazel twig
Adventurer in causes big,
The pastoral magician's friend
That lowly to the wells doth bend.
Alas-I lack the same in love,
For I would one that's charmed me prove
A virtuous and constant boy
And plumb his silent depth of joy.
For joy alone can rightly show
Whether a heart be true or no,
And constancy hath her root fast
Mid brisk emotions warmly cased,
Which only patient Art can find,
Art of body and of mind;
So aid me reason, branch of God,
And be my dear divining rod.
51

A
THE BUILDING.

(TO H.T.W.G.)
LL souls are clay save One that rears
Each in gradation to the sky
Until the shapen whole appears
A rapture in Eternity.
Clay's dead, yet bears alive and quick
A seed that in the kiln expands,
Warming the substance into brick
Before it touch the masons' hands.
Such bricks throughout the building serve
For wall and ceiling, arch and stair
And dome whose imperfected curve
Sits like an eagle on the air.
52

THE BUILDING
Each doth his portion due sustain
Nor shall as first or last be known,
The merest parapet doth reign
Co-equal with the cornerstone.
And each a different hue bewrays
Until the sacred work be done,
When all that now perplex the gaze
Shall gleam indissolubly one.
The angels then shall dance around
Upon the sealing of the dome
And welcome with eternal sound
The Master to his breathing home.
53

THE FAIRY.
THE twigs hang stiffly from the oak
And frosted is the fairies' mound,
King mole with all his creeping folk
Is warmly cabined underground;
Beneath a roof of glazing rime
The minnows glide on dreamy fin,
While I am left in starless clime;
I pray you, Mortal, let me in.
I have been dancing all the day
On tufted knolls beneath the sun,
And when he hid his globe away
I dared not think my playtime done.
But now the path is sunk in night,
The cruel cold hath pierced my skin,
I've stumbled to your casement light;
Open, I pray, and let me in.
54

THE FAIRY
The land I left is not so far
From this your icy window-pane,
But till the birth of morning-star
I seek its tiny coast in vain.
Yet I can tell you where it lies,
Whence I have strayed in idle sin
And you will lift those drowsy eyes;
Only I pray you, let me in.
The land is not so far from hence

(Oh you who toil so deep by night)
Where knowing is another sense
And thoughts are things; the cliffs of light
You ne'er beheld in dream so clear
As now, nor heard the airy din,
Nor touched the temple and the sphere
Of painless fire that flames therein.
55

THE FAIRY
You will not blame yourself or me
When morning comes and I am gone;
For I can set your fancy free
And raise her to a sacred throne.
E'en now your books are stale and old,
E'en now fresh sights and songs begin:
Oh, pray you, kill this aching cold;
For pity, Mortal, let me in.
56

THE
THE COMING OF LOVE.
(TO R.F.)
HERE is a sweetness playing in the house,
I know not how to say;
But yesterday
I heard it, faint as a shy creeping mouse
Around the wainscot, on the ceiling white,
Over the window ledge,
Like wind through sedge
In spring when shelving banks blow green and bright.
No instrument can spell it (for a theme
In a musician's mind
Were less refined),
Being moulded in the substance of a dream.
Oh spirit voice, divine similitude,
Thou hast awakened me
To agony
Of self-perplexing and amazement crude.
57

THE COMING OF LOVE
Such was the sound of Eve when, issuing
From her still sleeping lord,
In soft accord
She breathed a nuptial vow in lieu of ring ;
And Adam rising saw part of his flesh
In separation built
A woman, dwelt
Musingly, touched her hair's bedazzled mesh
And spake (believing that her beauty was
Himself made manifest,
His nature's best
Transfigured in a human looking-glass),
"Thing that I am, why art thou come from me,
Flesh of flesh, bone of bone?
I stand alone
And am but half, since half is waxed to thee."
And Eve said nothing, gazing on her soul,

For sex was not yet made;
Each unafraid
Admired and admiration was the whole,
58

THE COMING OF LOVE
While the birds merrily called and the new flowers
Shook fragrant petals bland
On either hand,
And brooks fled and fruits ripened in the bowers.
Even such the note that tumbled on his brain
His, the deaf music-child,
By fortune wild
Ordered mid men to eke out lonely pain,
When from the house wherein he had played joy
Into the road he passed
And saw the waste
Of midmost night and one star glistening coy,
Which star became a symphony, to join
Mankind in brotherhood,
And all things good
Into one solid arch of bliss to groin.
Rapturous air, I would not tax thee still
With emblems distant-drawn ;
The golden dawn
Sentinelled on a solitary hill
59

THE COMING OF LOVE
By truant youth entranced were liker thee,
Yet scarce so fugitive,
For, as I live,
Thine are the rainbow's charms that imaged flee.
In and about the mansion of my breast
Last night thy wanderings were,
Sleep came not there;
I tossed and moaned by melody oppressed.
For until then was I one brisk and strong
Taking delight in deeds;
Now weakness breeds
Within, my home is peopled by a song.
Why should a song, unreason of the heart,
Have will to interpose
Yet ne'er disclose
Its essence, breath tumultuously apart?
Commingle with me, make me even as thou,
A straying wind or beam,
A feathery dream,
An Ariel, rocking on a forest bough,
60

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THE COMING OF LOVE
A cloud before the moon, a pinnace fleet
Of silken rainy mist,
That where I list
Faring I may divine adventure meet.
"Ah no," thou singest? Be not arrogant,

Sorrow is there enough
On earth, the stuff
Of Beauty sleeps enfolded in thy chant.
Be gracious, Oh anticipation
Of longed-for loveliest heaven;
My spirit leaven
With liquid motes won from that serene zone!
I have striven in thy teasing gyves too long
For any mortal man.
Whisper thy plan;
Who would be discontented by a song?
Let us go forth, my soul, by that voice led.
Whether she will bestow
Herself or no
What care? The ancient griefs are passed and dead.
61

R
OXFORD.
AKE up the fire: the bells that keep
Incessant guard from Magdalen tower
Have long since chimed the midnight hour,
While I was lying here asleep.
The flames have withered one by one,
And now the lonely embers stand
Like temples on Egyptian land
Illumined by the sinking sun.
Bright was the moon when I began,
But long has drifted from the skies;
Upon the hearth my volume lies,
Its pages like a tumbled fan.
62

OXFORD
The jet-black coals are wholly turned
Translucent orange; early day
Will find a film of crumbling grey
Sole relic of the pile that burned.
Rake up the fire: how chill the breeze;
The dawn is creeping to the pane
Despite the web of gloom and rain
That mists her passage through the trees.
Put by the volume, dream no more,
The hearth is ice; too late for bed;
The starlings chatter overhead,
The morning trembles on the floor.
63
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